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7 CFR Ch. XVII (1–1–05 Edition)

(c) RUS will not approve a grant if RUS determines that:

(1) The applicant's proposal does not indicate financial feasibility or is not sustainable in accordance with the requirements of § 1703.125(e)(1);

(2) The applicant's proposal indicates technical flaws, which, in the opinion of RUS, would prevent successful implementation, operation, or sustainability of the project;

(3) Other applications would provide more benefit to rural America based on a review of the financial and technical information submitted in accordance with § 1703.125(e).

(4) Any other aspect of the applicant's proposal fails to adequately address any requirement of this subpart or contains inadequacies which would, in the opinion of RUS, undermine the ability of the project to meet the general purpose of this subpart or comply with policies of the DLT Program contained in § 1703.101.

(d) Grant applications will be ranked by the type of application (health care or educational) and total points scored. Grants available for medical and educational applicants may be allocated based on the total number of medical and educational applications scoring in the top 50 percent of all applications received for that fiscal year. Based on the number and type of applications received, applications may be ranked only in one category based on the predominant use of the project.

(e) RUS may reduce the amount of the applicant's grant based on insufficient program funding for the fiscal year in which the project is reviewed. RUS will discuss its findings informally with the applicant and make every effort to reach a mutually acceptable agreement with the applicant. Any discussions with the applicant and agreements made with regard to a reduced grant amount will be confirmed in writing, and these actions shall be deemed to have met the notification requirements set forth in paragraph (f) of this section.

(f) RUS will provide the applicant with an explanation of any determinations made with regard to paragraphs (c)(1) through (c)(4) of this section prior to making final project selections for the year. The applicant will be pro-

vided 15 days from the date of RUS' letter to respond, provide clarification, or make any adjustments or corrections to the project. If, in the opinion of the Administrator, the applicant fails to adequately respond to any determinations or other findings made by the Administrator, the project will not be funded, and the applicant will be notified of this determination. If the applicant does not agree with this finding an appeal may be filed in accordance with § 1703.129.

(g) Grantees shall comply with all applicable provisions of 7 CFR parts 3015, 3016, and 3019.

[64 FR 14360, Mar. 25, 1999; 64 FR 25422, May 12, 1999]

§ 1703.128 Submission of applications.

(a) Applications for grants shall be submitted to the RUS, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., STOP 1590, Washington, DC 20250–1590. Applications should be marked "Attention: Assistant Administrator, Telecommunications Program".

(b) Applications must be submitted to RUS postmarked not later than the application filing deadline established by the Administrator if the applications are to be considered during the period for which the application was submitted. The deadline for submission of applications each fiscal year will be published, and provided through other notices, by RUS in the FEDERAL REGISTER, at least 30 days before the deadline occurs. It is suggested that applications be submitted prior to the respective deadline to ensure they can be reviewed and considered complete by the deadline. RUS will review each application for completeness in accordance with § 1703.125, and notify the applicant, within 15 working days of the receipt of the application, of the results of this review, citing any information that is incomplete. To be considered for a grant, the applicant must submit the information to complete the application within 15 working days of the date of RUS' written response. If the applicant has submitted an application prior to the application filing deadline, the applicant will have 15 working days from RUS' response or until the application filing deadline to

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submit information, whichever provides the applicant more time. If the applicant fails to submit such information by the appropriate deadline, the application will be considered during the next established application period.

(c) All applicants must submit an original and two copies of a completed application. Applicants must also submit a copy of the application to the State government point of contact, if one has been designated for the State, at the same time it submits an application to RUS. All applications must include the information required by § 1703.125.

§ 1703.129 Appeals.

All qualifying applications under this subpart will be scored based on the criteria contained in § 1703.126. Awards will be made by RUS based on the highest ranking applications and the amount of financial assistance available for grants. All applicants will be notified in writing of the score each application receives, and included in this notification will be a tentative minimum required score to receive financial assistance. If the score received by the applicant could result in the denial of its application, or if its score, while apparently sufficient to qualify for financial assistance, may be surpassed by the score awarded to a competing application after appeal, that applicant may appeal its numerical scoring. Any appeal must be based on inaccurate scoring of the application by RUS and no new information or data that was not included in the original application will be considered. The appeal must be made, in writing, within 10 days after the applicant is notified of the scoring results. Appeals shall be submitted to the Administrator, RUS, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., STOP 1590, Washington, DC 20250-1590. Thereafter, the Administrator will review the original scoring to determine whether to sustain, reverse, or modify the original scoring determination. Final determinations will be made after consideration of all appeals. The Administrator's determination will be final. A copy of the Administrator's decision will be furnished promptly to the applicant.

Subpart F—Distance Learning and Telemedicine Combination Loan and Grant Program

SOURCE: 64 FR 14366, Mar. 25, 1999, unless otherwise noted.

§ 1703.130 Use of combination loan and grant.

(a) A combination loan and grant may be used by eligible organizations as defined in § 1703.103 for distance learning and telemedicine projects to finance 100 percent of the cost of approved purposes contained in § 1703.131 provided that no financial assistance may exceed the maximum amount for the year in which the combination loan and grant is made.

(b) Applicants must meet the minimum eligibility requirement for determining the extent to which the project serves rural areas as determined in § 1703.126(b)(2) (the applicant must receive at least 20 points to be eligible to receive financial assistance under this subpart).

§ 1703.131 Approved purposes for a combination loan and grant.

The approved purposes for a combination loan and grant are:

(a) Acquiring, by lease or purchase, eligible equipment or facilities as defined in § 1703.102;

(b) Acquiring instructional programming;

(c) Providing technical assistance and instruction for using eligible equipment, including any related software; developing instructional programming; providing engineering or environmental studies relating to the establishment or expansion of the phase of the project that is being financed with a combination loan and grant (this purpose shall not exceed 10 percent of the total requested financial assistance);

(d) Paying for medical or educational equipment and facilities that are shown to be necessary to implement the project, including vehicles utilizing distance learning and telemedicine technology to deliver educational and health care services. The applicant must demonstrate that such items are necessary to meet the purposes under this subpart and financial assistance